

Message Text

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15

ACTION IO-13

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 AGR-05 AID-05 EB-07 USIA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8102

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ROME FOR WFP

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SENV, EPAP, EAID, MA

SUBJECT: DROUGHT IN SOUTHERN MADAGASCAR

1. IN RECENT WEEKS THERE HAVE BEEN SCATTERED REPORTS OF SPARSE RAINFALL AND DROUGHT CONDITIONS IN SOME REGIONS OF SOUTHERN MADAGASCAR. UNDP CONDUCTED METEOROLOGICAL STUDY IN LATE MARCH WHICH SHOWED RAINS WERE UNUSUALLY LOW IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY, AND SEVERAL SOURCES REPORT SUBSTANTIAL BUT LOCALIZED CROP LOSSES. ALTHOUGH THE GDRM HAS RELEASED NO INFORMATION AND PRESS REPORTS HAVE BEEN FEW, WORLD FOOD PROGRAM (WFP) REPRESENTATIVE IN MADAGASCAR ESTIMATES CURRENT RICE CROP WILL BE TOTALLY LOST IN REGION OF FT. DAUPHIN, AND CROP LOSSES WILL EXCEED 50 PERCENT IN SOME DISTRICTS OF FIANARANTSOA PROVINCE. CATHOLIC RELIEF SOURCES IN FT. DAUPHIN REPORT CURRENT CORN AND RICE HARVEST IN THAT AREA WILL REACH ONLY 25 PERCENT OF NORMAL.

2. GDRM HAS APPROACHED UNDP HERE AND WFP IN ROME TO REQUEST EMERGENCY SUPPLIES OF RICE, BUT HAS GIVEN NO PRECISE ESTIMATE OF NEEDS OR PRODUCTION LOSSES, AND HAS NOT AS YET REQUESTED DIRECT DISASTER RELIEF FOR AFFLICTED DISTRICTS. WFP IS NOW REQUESTING HARD INFORMATION FROM GDRM ON NEEDS, AND WILL THEN DETERMINE WHAT IT CAN

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DO. UN HAS AGREED TO SUPPLY DOLS 200,000 FROM UN

EMERGENCY ORGANIZATION FUNDS TO BUY 800 TONS OF RICE FOR IMPORT. WFP REPRESENTATIVE PRIVATELY ESTIMATES THAT DROUGHT MAY REQUIRE IMPORT OF 15-20,000 TONS OF RICE MORE THAN WOULD OTHERWISE BE THE CASE.

3. COMMENT: DROUGHT-AFFLICTED DISTRICTS ARE NOT MAJOR FOOD-PRODUCING REGIONS OF MADAGASCAR, AND THE GOVERNMENT CAN DIVERT SOME SUPPLIES FROM OTHER AREAS. WHAT GDRM APPARENTLY WISHES IS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE IN MEETING FOREIGN EXCHANGE COST OF INCREASED RICE IMPORTS NOW REQUIRED TO MAKE UP SHORTFALL CAUSED BY DROUGHT. REPORTEDLY HEAVY RAINS HAVE BEEN FALLING IN FT. DAUPHIN DURING PAST WEEK, WHICH MAY AUGER WELL FOR A BETTER SECOND CROP THERE LATER THIS YEAR. BUT IN MEANTIME, SOURCES BELIEVE CONSIDERABLE HARDSHIP LIKELY IN ALLICTED REGIONS OVER AT LEAST THE NEXT 4-5 MONTHS.SHEINBAUM

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